IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Currently Amended) For use with network systems that employ packets having an associated priority, a head of line blockage avoidance system, comprising:

m inputs, m numbering at least two, configured to receive said packets;

n packet first-in-first-out buffers (FIFOs), n numbering at least two, each of said packet FIFOs configured to receive at least one of said packets from said m inputs said n packet FIFOs configured as m subsets of packet FIFOs, each of said packet FIFOs in each of said subsets being coupled to a ~~corresponding~~ different one of said m inputs;

a priority summarizer configured to generate a priority summary of said packets within said m inputs and said n packet FIFOs; and

a scheduler configured to cause one of said n packet FIFOs to be queued for processing based on said priority summary.

2. (Previously Presented) The head of line blockage avoidance system as recited in Claim 1 wherein said priority summary indicates which of said n packet FIFOs contains a packet having the highest priority or is to receive said packet having the highest priority from one of said m inputs.

3. (Previously Presented) The head of line blockage avoidance system as recited in Claim 2 wherein said priority summary further indicates an order in which to transmit said at least one of said packets contained within said n packet FIFOs to a destination FIFO based upon packet priority.

4. (Previously Presented) The head of line blockage avoidance system as recited in Claim 1 wherein each of said m inputs includes a source FIFO configured to contain at least one of said packets.

5. (Previously Presented) The head of line blockage avoidance system as recited in Claim 4 wherein said priority summarizer is further configured to generate said priority summary of said packets within each of said n packet FIFOs and said packets within said source FIFO of each of said m inputs that are to be transferred to said each of said n packet FIFOs.

6. (Previously Presented) The head of line blockage avoidance system as recited in Claim 1 further comprises a destination FIFO and an output, said destination FIFO interposing said n packet FIFOs and said output, said scheduler further configured to transfer at least one of said packets from said one of said n packet FIFOs toward said destination FIFO for transmission via said output.

7. (Previously Presented) The head of line blockage avoidance system as recited in Claim 1 wherein said scheduler is further configured to assign said associated priority to each of said packets based on a priority associated with each of said m inputs or a destination.

8. (Currently Amended) For use with network systems that employ packets having an associated priority, a method of operating a head of line blockage avoidance system, comprising:

employing m inputs, m numbering at least two, configured to receive said packets;

employing n packet first-in-first-out buffers (FIFOs), n numbering at least three, each of said packet FIFOs configured to receive at least one of said packets from said m inputs said n packet FIFOs configured as m subsets of packet FIFOs, each of said packet FIFOs in each of said subsets being coupled to a ~~corresponding~~ different one of said m inputs;

generating a priority summary of said packets within said m inputs and said n packet FIFOs; and

scheduling a one of said n packet FIFOs to be processed based on said priority summary.

9. (Previously Presented) The method as recited in Claim 8 wherein said priority summary indicates which of said n packet FIFOs contains a packet having the highest priority or is to receive said packet having the highest priority from one of said m inputs.

10. (Previously Presented) The method as recited in Claim 9 wherein said priority summary further indicates an order in which to transmit said at least one of said packets contained within said n packet FIFOs to a destination FIFO based upon packet priority.

11. (Previously Presented) The method as recited in Claim 8 wherein each of said m inputs includes a source FIFO configured to contain at least one of said packets.

12. (Previously Presented) The method as recited in Claim 11 wherein said generating further comprises generating said priority summary of said packets within each of said n packet FIFOs and said packets within said source FIFO of each of said m inputs that are to be transferred to said each of said n packet FIFOs.

13. (Previously Presented) The method as recited in Claim 8 further comprising employing a destination FIFO and an output, said destination FIFO interposing said n packet FIFOs and said output, said scheduling further comprises transferring at least one of said packets from said one of said n packet FIFOs toward said destination FIFO for transmission via said output.

14. (Previously Presented) The method as recited in Claim 8 wherein said scheduling further comprises assigning said associated priority to each of said packets based on a priority associated with each of said m inputs or a destination.

15. (Currently Amended) A crossbar head of line blockage avoidance system that employs packets having an associated priority, comprising:

m physical interfaces, m numbering at least two;

m inputs, each of said inputs coupled to corresponding ones of said m physical interfaces to receive said packets;

m outputs that transmit said packet to corresponding ones of said m physical interfaces, each of said outputs having:

n packet first-in-first-out buffers (FIFOs), n numbering at least m, each of said packet FIFOs receives at least one of said packets from said m inputs said n packet FIFOs configured as m subsets of packet FIFOs, each of said packet FIFOs in each of said subsets being coupled to a ~~corresponding~~ different one of said m inputs, and

a destination FIFO interposing said n packet FIFOs and said output;

a priority summarizer that generates a priority summary of said packets within said m inputs and said n packet FIFOs within each of said m outputs; and

a scheduler that causes one of said n packet FIFOs for each of said m outputs to be queued for processing based on said priority summary.

16. (Previously Presented) The crossbar head of line blockage avoidance system as recited in Claim 15 wherein said priority summary indicates which of said n packet FIFOs for each of said m outputs contains a packet having the highest priority or is to receive said packet having the highest priority from one of said m inputs.

17. (Previously Presented) The crossbar head of line blockage avoidance system as recited in Claim 16 wherein said priority summary further indicates an order in which to process said n packet FIFOs for each of said m outputs based upon packet priority.

18. (Previously Presented) The crossbar head of line blockage avoidance system as recited in Claim 15 wherein each of said m inputs includes a source FIFO configured to contain at least one of said packets.

19. (Previously Presented) The crossbar head of line blockage avoidance system as recited in Claim 18 wherein said priority summarizer generates said priority summary of said packets within each of said n packet FIFOs and said packets within said source FIFO of each of said m inputs that are to be transferred to said each of said n packet FIFOs.

20. (Previously Presented) The crossbar head of line blockage avoidance system as recited in Claim 15 wherein said scheduler causes to transfer at least one of said packets from said one of said n packet FIFOs toward said destination FIFO for transmission via said output for each of said m outputs.